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IS REALITY REALLY COMIC?

WHY philosophers, especially those who stress human evaluations of reality as indicative of its essential nature, should have paid so little attention to the *comic* value and its possible implications is an interesting question. The comic value is quite as "given" in human experience as any other, and, unless we assume *a priori* that no value judgments whatsoever have cosmic significance, there is no valid reason for not taking it into account in our speculations regarding the nature of the universe. The point at issue is that of whether or no, if we found ourselves in the presence of the totality of existence, we should discover in its essential nature the same characteristics as, experienced in that portion of it with which we are acquainted, arouse the reaction we call the sense of humor and make us laugh.

What then are these experienced characteristics which have a comic value for us and to which the sense of humor is our response? Doubtless the value needs more analysis than has yet been given it, but I think there is a fairly general agreement that it is associated with the incongruous, inconsistent, paradoxical, unexplained, and apparently spontaneous agitations and ripplings of the stream of consciousness, and with the surprise and shock they communicate to its more orderly, placid, and invariable undercurrents. The question, then, is, for the idealists, that of the extent to which those comic perturbations of the surface also agitate the depths of the mental activity which constitutes the real; for the realists, that of the extent to which they transcend experience and agitate also the substance of whatever may exist in addition to it.

At first sight it might seem surprising that philosophers have generally dodged this point, and have disdained the aid of the comic value in exploring the nature of reality, while making much of its moral, esthetic, and rational aspects as insights into its character. But there is at least one valid reason for their so doing. The most universal, consistent, and uninterrupted value that the universe has, or at any rate has heretofore had, for us lies in its amenability to *explanation,* or in what we will call its *intelligible value.* Indeed, we have been so happy in our ability to discover the causes of things and in progressively turning the unexplained,

or even the apparently inexplicable, into the explained, that most philosophic systems, while wrangling *ad infinitum* over the cosmic significance or insignificance of other human values, have been at one in imputing hypothetically the value of intelligibility to the totality of existence and in assuming that in reality nothing can occur without sufficient reason. Nay more, each system defends its own views on the ground that its particular attribution or denial of these other values to the nature of the universe most contributes to the intelligible value of the real.

Now, the moral values of an event, or the esthetic—other at least than the comic—are compatible and combinable with its intelligibility. Things that strike us as morally or esthetically good or bad may at the same time seem and prove explicable, and may do so without thereby altering the good or bad impression they otherwise make upon us. Hence we can, if we like, interpret such values as possible indications of the nature of reality, without endangering *a priori* the supposition that it can be understood. And we can push them more and more deeply into it, unless or until we find that by so doing we are rendering its observed characteristics and behavior unintelligible.

The case, however, is quite different with the comic value. Although it is combinable with the moral, and with the other esthetic values—even with the tragic, as when we do not know whether to laugh or cry at certain situations—it is not compatible and combinable with intelligibility. Explanation of the events possessing it does not leave it undisturbed as it does their other values, but destroys it outright. For an understanding of why things occur as they do, though it leaves them still intrinsically good, bad, or indifferent morally and esthetically, deprives them of the surprise they otherwise occasion, and thereby of their power to titillate the sense of humor. Therefore to admit that the comic value may have a cosmic significance and that it may be utilized as a possible guide to the nature of things is to admit that reality itself may possibly be irrational and unintelligible at heart, or at least that undetermined, unpredictable, spontaneous, and capricious elements may enter into its essential structure.

Heretofore few modern philosophers, whether idealistic, realistic, anthropocentric, naturalistic, theistic, or atheistic, have been willing to make such a confession. Most of them, on the contrary, have done their best to defend the essential intelligibility of the real, by entrenching it behind a wall of triple determinism, final, formal, or efficient, impenetrable in their opinion by spontaneity and chance. Even the mystics, while denying the applicability of any of the categories of human experience to the character of real-

ity, have felt that intelligibility was at least the basic value of the phenomenal universe. Hence the constructive modern philosophies of the West have as a rule proposed "block-universes" of one sort or another, in which every slightest detail is sufficiently accounted for mechanically or teleologically or by logical determination, or by a combination of efficient, formal, and final causation. In such a universe nothing *really* undetermined, paradoxical, or startling can *really* take place, and the comic value rests upon a failure on our part to comprehend the intelligible pattern of the real due to the limitations of the human mind, rather than upon any lack of intelligibility in the pattern itself. More profoundly viewed, we are told, the seeming whimsicality of the behavior of things will be found to be completely explicable, and therefore humorless. When we laugh at it, we are really laughing at no more than our own misunderstanding or inadequate comprehension of its essentially rational character.

But this triple wall of determinism defending the intelligibility of the real has never been as solid as it looks. In the first place, it is built upon the logical fallacy of begging the question. For it rests on a mere assumption that a more intimate acquaintance with the universe would dispel the comic value and leave that of intelligibility intact, whereas, for all we know, a more intimate acquaintance might do just the reverse.

Again, the materials of which the deterministic wall is constructed differ in strength. Final and formal causation have never been more than metaphysical hypotheses, lacking empirical confirmation, except for some possible but disputable indications of teleology in organic phenomena. Formal causation, in an absence of knowledge of the structure of the whole that logically necessitates the nature and position of its parts, amounts to little more than saying that things are what they are because they are what they are—which does not exactly explain them. Final causation, as Descartes pointed out, suffers metaphysically from the difficulty of inferring from the nature of the universe the purposes that are supposed to organize and direct it—which lands us in the fallacy of explaining the unknown by the more unknown. If we impose an arbitrarily selected purpose we are no better off, for then we may be accused of arguing in a circle. Moreover, as Linnaeus pointed out, an anthropocentric teleology works equally well in reverse. And the "argument from design" is riddled with instances of dysteleology. Finally the seeming "purposiveness" detected by Kant in the reciprocal interaction of the whole and the parts of an organism may be explicable, as he himself took care to point out, in terms of efficient causation. In any case, the

face value of teleology is that of purpose, whatever it may be, hampered, blocked, and thwarted in its fulfillment either by counter-purposes, by an "intractable matter" of some sort with which it is unable to cope, or by the interference of spontaneous, undetermined, and therefore possibly comic, events which it can neither foresee nor prevent. These three methods of accounting for the dysteleological behavior of the universe have been used, singly or in combination, throughout the history of philosophy.

Efficient causation has heretofore proved the most cohesive, the strongest, the best able to bear the most weight, and therefore the most reliable and useful of the three varieties of determinism. It has worked hitherto throughout the whole field of phenomena covered by the physical sciences, and nowhere in the realms of biology and psychology has its operation been successfully challenged by that of any other form of causation. In combination with mathematics it has been our only efficient instrument for understanding the behavior of the universe and for utilizing and applying that understanding in practical ways. And even in the sphere of metaphysical speculation final and formal causation in their palmiest days were never able to substitute themselves directly for it, but only to try to subordinate it to themselves. But even efficient causation, as we are about to see, is built, not upon a rock, but upon sand, and, at that, upon the same quicksands as undermine final and formal causation.

This instability of the intelligible value as a basic and universal characteristic of the nature of the real has shown itself from the beginning in cracks in the deterministic wall, which, indeed, it has been one of the chief businesses of philosophy to patch up, or, in some cases, we would rather say, to paint over. We can certainly argue, for example, that the fact that reality seems to appear to a part of itself different from what it really is, is a fact for which no explanation can be found, and which is therefore incompatible with the complete intelligibility of the totality of existence. The optimists, incidentally, have piled Ossa on Pelion by proclaiming that a universe whose conduct appears in some respects amoral or immoral to a part of itself can nevertheless be regarded as not only a completely intelligible but a completely moral order. Some philosophers have faced the situation frankly. The Buddhists, if I am not mistaken, admit that the obscuration of Nirvana by the veil of Maya can not be accounted for. And Schopenhauer, following their lead, tells that both the affirmation and the denial of the will to live are inexplicable..

However all this may be, it is generally admitted, either openly or surreptitiously, that for the existence and nature of the real

itself no sufficient reason can be found—in other words that the presence of the real is an unintelligible fact. Aristotle pointed this out in his assertion that, whatever might be the "first principles" invoked to explain the universe, they could not themselves be explained. To be sure, this defect was quickly painted over with terms like "self-caused," "self-existent," "self-explanatory," and the like. But it was not thereby repaired. For the prefix "self" in such contexts is only too often an "asylum of ignorance." Its effects are subjective rather than objective. Like the Latin polysyllabic synonyms of Anglo-Saxon monosyllables, it is a kind of shock-absorber which spares our feelings but does not lessen the roughness of the road. In the hyphenations just mentioned it is merely a delicate way, less shocking to our intellectual sensibilities, of intimating the coarse fact that *causa sui* = *sine causa*.

Now, it may well be that this ultimate irrationality and unintelligibility of the existence and nature of the real as a whole is not concentrated at the bottom, or the beginning, or the end, of the universe in a fortuitous and inexplicable formal, efficient, or final cause, but peppers and salts its entire surface with a constant occurrence of spontaneous, uncaused, unmotivated, and purposeless events, noticeable even in our daily experience. Such distribution of the uncaused and the incalculable was admitted in ancient philosophy by Plato, Aristotle, and the Epicureans, who included a constantly operative factor of chance and spontaneity among the constituents of the real. In our own day it has been reasserted in the tychistic hypotheses of Peirce, James, Schiller, Brown, and others, and also in their several ways by Bergson, Alexander, and Santayana.

To this breach in the deterministic wall we must add that created by the unsparing attacks on the concept of causation in general launched in ancient philosophy by the skeptics, in scholastic, by Nicolas of Autrecourt, and in modern, by the British empiricists, most notably by Hume; which denied the possibility of either perceiving or conceiving any *necessary* connection of any sort whatsoever between events. And Kant, in his attempt to rehabilitate determinism as a subjective "necessary" category of human experience, explicitly warns us against introducing any of its forms into the world of things-in-themselves, or even into possible non-human methods of perceiving or thinking.

Perhaps, however, the most penetrating and obvious crack in the intelligible value is that created by the freedom of the will. For, as Kant pointed out, this is not merely a metaphysical theory but an experienced fact. We *feel* free in our decisions and acts. To interpret the feeling as indicative of an "indifference" of the

will not only to external compulsion, but to determination by the character of the agent, is to regard it as expressive of a spontaneous, uncaused tychistic activity for which we, as Hume pointed out, no more than the rest of the real, can account. If, however, we regard, as most philosophers do, the feeling of freedom as expressive not of tychism, but of a "self-determination" of the will, we are little better off, since the "self" that does the determining must itself be either a tychistic or a determined event. In the one case, its existence re-opens the breach in the intelligibility of the universe that "self-determination" is supposed to patch up; in the other, the feeling of freedom turns out to be inspired, as Spinoza thought, by no more than an ignorance of the causes that inexorably compel us to be what we are and to behave as we do.

From such compelling causes of human character and conduct, we must, however, exclude the final and the formal, unless we are content to regard their operations and effects as indiscernible from those of efficient causation—in which case, incidentally, there is no need to employ them as explanations, and to do so lays us open to the charges of unnecessarily multiplying principles of explanation and of the fallacy of *non causa pro causa* in dealing with particular phenomena. For any final or formal determination of the human will, and of human affairs in general, by other than "mechanically" motivated causes producing effects of other than "mechanical" import for us, must be regarded as either only partial, and therefore as not all-compelling, or as giving rise to results that contradict their supposed motivation, and therefore as unintelligible.

All this, however, is largely war in heaven whose decision one way or the other little affects human affairs on earth. Neither the individual nor society is pragmatically concerned with the metaphysical origin, whether determined or tychistic, of those human activities that *feel* free, self-initiated, and creative. The existence of the feeling of freedom, as evidenced objectively by the absence of perceived contemporaneous external compulsion, is sufficient basis for holding the individual morally, socially, and legally responsible for his conduct, for richer for poorer, for better for worse. Our rewards and punishments, our praises and rebukes, our attributions of merit and demerit, we visit upon him and not upon his ancestors and his environment or upon chance, as we should by rights if we took metaphysics into account. Nor does the individual—or at least the virtuous individual—try to disclaim the consequences, terrestrial or celestial, of his behavior by directing that they shall be laid upon the altar of Tyche or his grandmother's grave.

Following Hume's example, we now descend "with suitable modesty" from "these sublime mysteries" to an "examination of common life." Here we find science, as yet undisturbed by the metaphysical attacks upon determinism, extending the concept of efficient causation to an ever widening circle of observed phenomena and even proclaiming hypothetically a mechanistic uniformity of the whole of nature. But this complacency was soon to be shaken by a challenge, on the part of an imposing array of the scientists themselves, to our right to attribute universal validity to the laws of nature or to scientific or even to mathematical concepts in general. Nay more, the question was raised whether, even within the segment of the real with which we were acquainted, we could properly regard them, and with them metaphysical and theological concepts, as more than the most convenient condensations, descriptions, and constructs, subject to change without notice, of the experience of the moment, whose reference to any objective reality existing independently of that experience was, to say the least, open to doubt.

Such change was about to take place. Some previous notice, however, of its imminence and character was given by biology and botany, whose investigations were now suggesting that the evolution of plant and animal life, instead of being a continuous and orderly process apparently governed by causation, proceeded by fits and starts and leaps and bounds, and expressed itself in sudden mutations and sports, inexplicable by any of the three forms of determinism. Almost contemporaneously a more comprehensive and penetrating observation and analysis of inorganic phenomena revealed the existence of a like situation in the material aspects of the real, and gave rise to the theory of relativity, the quantum theory, and the "principle of uncertainty." These hypotheses, supported and verified by the further investigations they inspired, seem to have uprooted efficient and mechanical, along with final and formal, causation from the physical subsoil of reality, and to have left it clinging somewhat precariously to the surface, though sufficiently firmly to countenance a trust in its reliability in so far as our practical relations with the universe are concerned.

Meanwhile, the Freudian theory was initiating a revolution of the same import in psychology. Under psycho-analysis the moral and rational organization of the mind gave evidence of being a secondary and superficial aspect of mental activity, supported, not too safely, by a "censorship" of fundamental blind, irrational, and amoral impulses, imposed upon them in the process of adapting the individual to his social and physical environment. All in all, the depths of the mind seemed to be pretty much of a piece

with intra-atomic matter and, like it, to suggest that the stable mental and physical aspects of the real are only skin deep and that beneath them pulses a fluid substance of spontaneity, chance, and caprice, whose behavior is completely undetermined and unintelligible.

In that case, both the physical sciences and psychology now indicate that not only has the real all the makings of the comic value, but that the comic value is more representative of its essence than any other human evaluation of its nature, and that the sense of humor is perhaps the most clairvoyant of our reactions to its conduct. For the other values, including the intelligible, are only appraisals of its crust, and hold good only as long as that crust remains intact and will bear their weight. Any undue or extensive eruption of the spontaneity of the real into the phenomenal world might conceivably alter them or destroy one or another of them completely. But however it might change the relation of the real to human interests, it would still be an exhibition on the part of reality of characteristics whose appearance in our actual experience of the universe makes us laugh, provided only they do not too greatly upset the other values in conjunction with which they display themselves.

To be sure, some philosophers, theologians, and scientists, while turning a cold shoulder to the possible bearings of the Freudian and the post-Freudian psychology upon the nature of mind, have warmly embraced the similar bearings of ultra-physics upon the nature of matter as fresh evidence of the existence of a stable, orderly, purposive personal intelligence governing the world-process. But surely any human person whose character was inferred from behavior like that of intra-atomic matter would be regarded, to say the least, as somewhat eccentric.

Be that as it may, there would seem to be a certain inconsistency in ignoring the outcome of one line of investigation and at the same time welcoming the almost identical outcome of another, only, however, to draw from the latter a conclusion not only unsupported but contradicted by both. This inconsistency is, I think, the effervescence of a mixture of two fears—one of anything that casts doubt upon the complete intelligibility of the real in terms of final causation, the other of anything that might impair its religious value. Since the mechanical hypothesis is both such things in the opinion of the teleologists, they welcome all evidence of tychism as a powerful weapon to help knock it out. But to side-step the boomerang—like recoil of such evidence upon their own views, they leap without looking to the *non sequitur* that whatever makes the universe *less* intelligible from a mechanistic point of view must

necessarily make it *more* intelligible from a teleological and theistic one.

It does not seem to me, however, that the implications of the new psychology and the new physics that the real is at least partially and perhaps predominantly erratic at heart, and at times really comic and amusing in its behavior, need detract from its religious value, even in the anthropomorphic and highly moralized form the value takes on in personal theism. To be sure, if the behavior of the material world and of the human mind are still to be regarded, as they have been in the past by many philosophers, as indications of the character of a divine person who creates, sustains, and directs an idealistic or a realistic universe as the case may be, our concept of his nature must apparently be altered. The idealists, whether monistic or pluralistic, will have to regard his rational and moral attributes as, like ours, the results of an incompletely established censorship of spontaneous, unmotivated, and undetermined impulses which sometimes break through it in the form of "absent-minded," capricious conduct, whose unpredictable eruption surprises him, and when it works evil, distresses him; just as we regret our own instability, lack of self-control, and outbursts of temper. Incidentally, this is as satisfactory a solution of the problem of evil as any the optimistic idealists have as yet proposed. The realists, however, can endow him with a more completely established censorship and a greater rational and moral stability by locating a part, at any rate, of chance and spontaneity in the non-mental constituents of the real, and by blaming on them and on God's inability to handle them successfully the amoral and immoral features of the phenomenal world.

But there is nothing particularly novel or startling in these suggestions. We customarily evaluate and deal with human persons on the level of the "censored" self, and only as psychiatrists are practically concerned with the lower levels of personality; just as we "do business" with the physical world on its crystallized, predictable level, and only as ultra-physicists pay much attention to what goes on beneath the surface. Even the recent, perilous tapping of its hidden energies, inspired by ultra-physics, has been conducted on the assumption that under certain conditions certain things will happen. Again, these suggestions are not unknown to theology. Ancient Greek theology conceived the gods as beings whose rational and moral control, both of their own native impulses and of the course of cosmic events, was imperfect, albeit increasing. And ancient philosophy taught for the most part that any assumed rational and moral government of the world, however wisely and well intentioned it might be, must also be assumed to be impeded

and marred by intractable factors, among which chance, as we have seen, was frequently reckoned. Again, in scholastic philosophy Duns Scotus held that God constituted himself a rational and moral being by a spontaneous, unmotivated act of undetermined will, uncensored, we might say, by prior principles and uncontrolled by final purposes—in other words, tychistically. Finally, in our own day, James and Schiller have insisted that a moral personal God *must* be conceived as obstructed in his activities by intractable *external* factors, to say the least, among which, in their opinion, chance plays a leading part. Otherwise, they contend, he can not be regarded as beneficent, and sympathetic with human ideals, and in a useful pragmatic relation of reciprocal moral coöperation with us in striving to improve the universe.

In that case, we may remark in passing, the personal variety of religious experience can have real significance only in a universe in which the comic value, also, has real significance.

But in that case again, we may well attribute to a personal God so circumstanced a sense of humor. The idealists may conceive him as amused and laughing at the more trivial results of his own absentmindedness; the realists at some of the unexpected and unpredictable tricks that a tychistic universe plays him. Moreover, the possession of a sense of humor would, if anything, enhance his religious value. For the comic value makes the world more interesting and sparkling for us, and a sense of humor enriches human experience. Why, then, should not a personal God, also, find the real more valuable for the presence of the one, and the divine experience the richer for the possession of the other?

Furthermore, the sense of humor is not a purely contemplative virtue. It is a practical one as well, which helps us deal with the milder vicissitudes arising from the trying aspects of both human and cosmic behavior. Indeed, we speak of it as a "saving grace." Why, then, should we deny its solace to a God who has his troubles, too? Like ourselves, he may not know whether to laugh or cry at times, and may take in good part the jokes that the chance and spontaneity lurking in his own character or in that of the other constituents of the real play upon him; just as we, thanks to a sense of humor, can take in good part the jokes that the inconsistencies of our own conduct and of that of the universe so frequently play upon us.

All in all, perhaps Homer was right in saying that on occasions the laughter of the Immortals shakes the skies. Let us hope so for their sake; and for our own as well, since an ability shared in common to laugh at things and to laugh them off would be still another tie between man and a personal God.

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SECONDARY QUALITY[1]

I. Naïve Realism and Its Alternatives

DOES a tree, falling in a forest where no one can hear it, make a sound? The simple affirmative answer to this question is characteristic of what is known as naïve realism. Naïve realism may be taken either as no theory at all but a dogma of common sense, or as a theory which aims at saving the appearances and justifying the naïve belief that things are as they seem. The basic thesis of naïve realism is: the qualities perceived in a thing are qualities *of* the thing and not primarily of the knowing consciousness, for we directly perceive the object and not some subjective effect or percept in ourselves which represents it.

In general, I believe, all arguments for this thesis can be reduced to one form. It begins with an *argumentum ad ignorantiam*. Do we not explain the known in terms of the unknown when we "reduce" the perceived qualities to unperceived and hypothetical states of affairs such as wave-motions? We have no qualities to attribute to the object if not the qualities we know. Then follows a *reductio ad absurdum*. If the reality we perceive—in this case the sound of a tree falling when someone *can* hear it—is not anywhere save in consciousness itself, what is there in the external world to be its occasion? Is not our evidence for the hypothetical wave-motions itself also qualitative, or mediated by the consciousness of quality? And hence should it not also be reduced, by the logic of the critic's argument, to qualities of states of consciousness? And if this is the case, do we have anything left except consciousness and its private contents? If there remains nothing objective to be the cause of the nervous changes associated with events in consciousness, and if finally not even nervous changes exist except as hypothetical constructs used to "explain" mental events, the theory denies its own ground for subjectivism. Thus a causal theory of perception, which underlies the alternatives to naïve realism, becomes impossible. Solipsism, which results, is, however, no more absurd than the argument by which it is here implied.

If denying the thesis of naïve realism—which has the conviction of common sense to back it up—has consequences so devastating to common sense, to *prima facie* conceptions of truth and knowledge and reality, and even to the subjectivistic alternatives to the theory

[1] This is a revised version of a paper read to the Fullerton Club at Bryn Mawr College on March 9, 1946.

of direct perception, is it not intelligent to defend the naïve point of view?

A well-known chapter in the history of epistemology bears out the significance of this argument, showing that all is lost when the first step towards subjectivity is taken. Locke, faced with conflicting claims of various cognitions to the truth about given objects, saw a way out by taking the most debatable aspects of the object away from the object altogether and locating them in the mind. These he called the "secondary qualities." They were qualities such as color, taste, odor, and, in our example, the sound we hear when a tree falls. The qualities which inhered in the object itself were those of size, shape, number, solidity, and motion. Modifications among the latter caused modifications in the way the receptive sense organs wrote ideas on the mind. Physics could deal with the primary qualities and point out the necessary conditions for the occurrence of secondary qualities. Locke's theory has come to be known as representative realism, because the qualities perceived represent reals but are not objectively real; they are ideas, some of which (ideas of primary qualities) directly duplicate the properties of the object, and some of which (those of secondary qualities) merely serve as signs of the properties or powers of the object.

Berkeley, who was very far from being a naïve realist in the ordinary meaning of the word, but who yet attempted to save the appearances so jeopardized by Locke, very quickly saw the flaws in Locke's argument. In the first place, the mechanism by which secondary qualities are perceived is not, in principle, different from the mechanism of the perception of secondary qualities. Any argument proving one to be subjective will also prove the subjectivity of the other. And, secondly, an object characterized only by primary qualities is merely an abstract idea of the object, not the object itself or a part of it. Now Berkeley was convinced that, at least in epistemology and psychology, Locke's arguments for the subjectivity of secondary qualities were valid; but his own argument showed that Locke's conviction of the objectivity of primary qualities was untenable. Therefore he drew a conclusion of the kind the contemporary naïve realist considers quite sufficiently damning of the whole point of view which engendered the conclusion. Here we can clearly see the occasion for a naïve revolt, not so much against Hume's skepticism as against Locke's representationism which inevitably implied it. Thomas Reid, for instance, remarked, "Ideas seem to have something in their nature unfriendly to other existences. . . . They have by degrees supplanted

their constituents, and undermined the existence of everything but themselves."

The stage was thereby set for the realists' counter argument. Their challenge was: either you save the appearances, or you save nothing. The world can not exist half subjective and half objective. Wheresoever the object is, there must be its qualities also.

Yet in the dialectic development of representative realism and Berkeley's idealism, the problem of the naïve realist has become multiplied. The appeal to common sense, so unquestioned prior to the development of its alternatives, is not adequate as a theory in the face of problems which forced the original retreat from naïveté. Naïveté, like innocence, when once lost can never be regained. Common sense is forced to become subtle and critical in the face of problems; it is forced away from being common sense. What about errors and illusions? What of the perspectives of objects? What of the time-lag in perception? How about the specific energies of the sensory nerves? It is not my purpose to show how each of these objections has been or can be dealt with in the frame-work of a critical realism that still calls itself naïve, except by developing an alternative to naïve realism, properly so called, which will keep the object in the external world where it belongs, which will keep the quality and the object together, and which will not allow all the facts of sensory psychology and psychophysics to appear irrelevant to the occurrence and understanding of perception.

II. The Flaw in the Argument for Skepticism

Two things may be granted. First, there are qualities which are attributed to an object but which do not actually characterize it in the way they appear *prima facie* to belong to it. For instance, when a tree falls, the sound different listeners will hear will vary with their location, and all of them can not be simply attributed to the object. Second, some attribution of quality to an object must be permitted, else the object can not be said to exist at all, knowledge loses its *prima facie* character, and no causes remain to which we can refer the psychological occurrence accompanying perception.

Both of these statements can be accepted once we cease to make a sharp dichotomy between the contents of consciousness and the quality of objects. Though it is not necessary to identify them, we do not have to say that a quality is either in one or in the other but not in both. Such a statement that primary qualities belong to the object and secondary qualities to the subject involves a fragmentation of the object into properties which are real but do not

appear and properties which appear but are not real. Not only is such a distinction metaphysically fatal, but it is epistemologically impossible. As we have seen, the first step to subjectivity is at the same time a step towards solipsism. The step can be avoided by acknowledging that the valuable distinction between primary and secondary qualities need not be drawn as if it coincided with that between object and subject. The distinction is valid and important because it holds between kinds of properties generally, wherever they may be found. It must not be allowed to appear as an ontological dichotomy between object and subject.

Locke formulated the distinction as ontological. By sensualizing the intellect, as Kant says, he interpreted the Cartesian dualism in psychological terms, in the light of a supposed difference in the mechanism of our perceiving the two kinds of properties. The distinction, however, even as drawn by Locke, is not ultimately psychological or ontological at all. It is a methodological distinction, whose metaphysical consequence must be quite different from that of a dualism of two realms of being with different mechanisms required for cognizing them. Locke, we can now see, attempted to save as much of the appearances as he could consistently with the demands of a parsimonious physics. The primary qualities were those which could be perceived through more than one sense modality and which could therefore be checked. They could be treated geometrically and hence could be the basis of hypotheses whose exact mathematical consequences could be confirmed. They could be terms in hypotheses predicting the occurrence of other primary and secondary qualities.

Such primary qualities were all the physicist required. All he needed to know about the tree falling in the forest was the amplitude, the frequency, and the composition of the wave-motion it set up. Given an ear and some experience in psychophysics, he could predict what it would hear. But as a physicist he could very well dispense with the ear and the heard sound; the latter was at most a confirmation of his theory.

Now admitting that the distinction is methodological, or was drawn on at least tacit methodological grounds, we have nevertheless to ask a metaphysical question, viz., is it possible for one thing to have such diverse qualities as primary and secondary, qualities so diverse that Descartes and almost all scientists since Galileo have assigned them to entirely different realms of being? Can a tree both set up air waves and really have a sound? Can light both be really colored and have a specified wave-length? And can light of a specified wave-length really have the qualities seen in it by a person who is color-blind and by one with normal vision?

One may object that sound and vibration are only "two ways of saying the same thing." But what is "the same thing"? This question can not be solved on a linguistic level. If they are the same thing said in different ways, are they the same thing *appearing* in different ways? What is the relation between their two appearances? We want to know, in a word, how a thing can be the object of both the physicist and of common-sense perception, or, more generally, how a unitary object can stand in diverse epistemological relations which seem to have nothing in common except the object itself.

III. The Thing in its Relations

What an object is in isolation we do not know. Obviously we can know it only in an epistemological relation to our knowing consciousness, with whatever increments may be contributed by this. And if this tautology appears to be trivial, we must nevertheless admit that we find in experience that the object always appears in relation to other objects. What it might be in self-sufficient isolation is not disclosed to us.

But though objects are always given in relationships, it is desirable to determine, so far as we can, the separate rôle of each object in a given relationship. By regressing from relationships in which we find objects, we may be able to approach, at least asymptotically, to the unrelated object. In order to determine the specific property of a relationship among objects, we abstract from the histrionic status of the object in the relation and try to ascertain what it and the other relata severally contribute to the specific character of the relationship. In this way we can learn the invariant structures of relationships and what increment emerges in the establishment of a new relation.

The one invariant we find in all relationships is a difference between relata. An object, in order to enter into a relation, must be other than the object to which it is related. "To be" presupposes "to be different."[2] There is no relation except between discriminable entities. "To be different," of course, expresses a relation, but it is a minimum of relation, presupposing no other relation but presupposed by all others. Furthermore, it is different from all other relations, for, while any specific relation holds only between objects constituted in certain specific ways, this relation is wholly independent of any variation or mutation that the

[2] For this succinct formulation I am indebted to the unpublished manuscripts of Mr. William Hester, of Duke University. Cf. also his "A Note on Existence," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 2 (1941), pp. 101–103.

object may undergo or of any change that we arbitrarily introduce into the object by definition or manipulation. It is thus a limiting relation in our regression, and mere difference is the limiting concept of the object abstracted from the relational contexts in which we always find it.

In our regression we therefore end with a set of merely distinguishable entities. We can not say what any of them is without appealing to the relations from which we have just isolated it. The features of objects by virtue of which they were found in some relationships but not in others, are no longer explicit properties. All we are left with is what I will call the "potential nature" of the object. This potential nature appears as actual properties of the object only when it is seen in relations. Yet the object has these properties potentially as its nature, since the relations which actualize the properties do not have absolute sovereignty over the object. The object's nature itself determines what relations it can enter and even what position it will occupy in a system of relations.

We reach towards the potential nature by a kind of motivated ignorance, for when we know something we know it as actualized in relations, with its properties actual and definite. Now, if we relax our self-imposed ignorance, we see the properties of the object evolve from its potential nature as the object, before consciousness, re-enters the relations we have been disregarding. By seeing the object in relations to others, we find similarities and differences among them. Furthermore, we find the object in asymmetrical relations, and, moreover, in a specific place in a system of such relations. The relations do not by themselves determine the class to which the object will belong or the position it will occupy. When I say, "This object is larger than that," it is not because the relation by itself makes it so, but because the potential natures of the two objects in question determine where each will fit into the relationship whose structure we know. The relational context qualifies the object, but it does so only because the objects are "patient" of these relations; it is the potential nature of the object which determines whether it can enter a set of relations and, if it does so, at what point.

The specific characteristic an object gains in this way through its participation in a relationship I shall call a "relational property." Though all actual properties are achieved in this manner, it is well to use the adjective "relational" to emphasize the difference between property and bare potential nature. For the purposes of clarifying the status of secondary qualities, relational properties can be classified according to the following schema:

(*a*) ***Systemic properties.*** A systemic property is a property an object must have simply by virtue of being a relatum in a given relation. They have their necessary and sufficient conditions within the system of relations. Example: the Protestantism of the English heir apparent.

(*b*) ***Essential real properties.*** Such a property has within a relational system a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition. Such a property is a manifestation, within a relationship, of an aspect of the potential nature of the object. Example: this object is one inch long, or 2.54 centimeters long, depending on the system in use.

(*c*) ***Accidental real properties.*** If an object has a property whose necessary condition is defined by a system of relations different from the one we are at any moment considering, that property is accidental to the object as defined in the system in question. Example: the Protestantism of the President of the United States.

Let us consider each of these in more detail. A systemic property obtains even for a supposititious member of an empty class. In the example given, I know that the English heir apparent must be a Protestant, even though at the moment there is no such person. Systemic properties apply also to existing objects when we have well-articulated logical systems for their definition. Essential and accidental real properties, however, apply only to existing objects, i.e., objects whose being is not exhausted in their position within a system of relations. An existing object is always more than can be defined in any given system, and therefore we can say that a real object always possesses an accidental property. What specific property we shall call essential and which ones will be called accidental are determined by convenience; by a shift of interest (relational context) what is essential can become accidental, and conversely.

The well-known fact that the distinction between accident and essence is based on a methodological convention does not imply, however, that the distinction is arbitrary. As a matter of fact, though we *may* call any property accidental or essential, we generally require that a property we call essential be defined in a logical system of relations in which the property in question will be connected implicatively or causally with a maximum of other properties. Relationships which mediate a maximum of inferences are those which are homogeneous, holding between relata which belong to the same class. What we call primary properties are defined by relations among like objects. Such objects are substitutable, and many of the relations are transitive. Inference in such a system is more parsimonious than in a system comprising objects of diverse classes; in the latter case, many of the relations generate relational properties which are not systemic, and inference must depend on the continual addition of information which is purely empirical in origin.

The relation of the knowing organism to its object is a complex one, comprising both homogeneous relations (inasmuch as the organism is a physical being stimulated by a physical object) and heterogeneous relations. The object's relation to other objects is homogeneous and defines its primary qualities. The heterogeneous subject-object relation, in comparison to the interobjective relations, defines properties which, in conformity to ordinary usage, can be called accidental.

Our problem of the status of secondary quality, which we *need* to assume only in the subject-object relation, is thus reduced to more fundamental terms. Our question may be phrased more generally than at the beginning. It is: do accidental properties differ in locus from essential properties? And the answer, again in general terms, is that inasmuch as the distinction is conventional and methodological, and since both essential and accidental properties are manifestations of potential nature, the question of locus must be answered in the same way in the two cases.

IV. The Locus of Secondary Quality

We are now ready to return to the more specific problem and to examine the locus of secondary qualities in the light of the relational theory of all qualities. Let us see exactly what is at stake, what is now established, and what is still moot.

(1) It may be granted that the secondary quality is not "intrinsic" to the object. Like all specific qualities including the primary, it inheres in the object only in certain relationships. (2) Secondary qualities are not physical properties, i.e., properties defined by the relations of interest to physics. They are accidental to physical objects, but that does not entail that they are not qualities of physical objects (or, better, of objects which as a matter of fact are of interest to physics). (3) It follows that instances of secondary quality occur under conditions which are not definable in exclusively physicalistic terms, for such terms stand in relations which generate from potential nature only primary qualities.

An extreme naïve realist would deny each of these and concede only our last thesis, viz., (4) the secondary qualities of physical objects are the properties which manifest to us the real existence of the object. This fourth thesis follows from the fact that a real object always possesses an accident, since no single relational system exhausts its potentialities.

All that is in question, as I see it, is this: do the primary qualities pertain to the objects of perception more directly than do the secondary qualities, so that we have to regard the latter as having a

different locus and, perhaps, a lower status in reality? The representative realist answers this question affirmatively. Nevertheless, a negative answer is a plausible alternative both to naïve realism and its unsolved problems and to a representative realism which has historically eventuated in skepticism.

The object as it is by itself has no actual property; its nature is only potential, but its potentiality is not restricted to one homogeneous set of properties. An object may enter more than one set of relations and thus possess an accident, unless there is a formal incompatibility between the relations or a material incompatibility between the relational properties the two relations would actualize in it. Neither is the case here. There is no incompatibility between the relations generating the primary and the secondary qualities. And so far from there being any incompatibility between the properties themselves, the psychophysicist has succeeded in correlating them. Consequently the object need not be just a physical object or just a perceptual object. It may be both; and this, instead of being a linguistic embarrassment, as at the beginning, is exactly what would be expected in view of the relational origin of all qualities.

Furthermore, analogies appear between the origin of primary and that of secondary qualities. The physical properties of objects are properties they have in systems of homogeneous relations which give each of them an extensive or intensive magnitude. We do not ask where a property like weight is, even though an object alone has no weight and could have no weight, for both cosmological and methodological reasons. The wetness of water, to take another example, emerges from a complex involving the relation of oxygen to hydrogen; but we do not ask where the wetness is, in the one or the other. Such questions have no meaning. They presuppose a simple location and absolute inherence of property in substance, and they manifest a tendency to regard wholes as merely contingent aggregates of parts, not as substances in their own right.

By analogy, such questions have no meaning with respect to secondary qualities, for these arise as emergents from relationships too. These relationships are not, however, homogeneous with respect to their relata. They are relationships between physical objects and sensitive organisms. They generate relational properties which are accidental with respect to the essential physical and biological properties, defined on the two sides of this epistemological relation by homogeneous psycho-biological and physical situations, respectively. The physical properties are generally considered essential to the object, and therefore it will not sound odd to say that the secondary qualities are accidental. Consciousness

specified to a particular sensory quality by these relationships is the relational property described as an extraneous modification of the organism. Secondary quality is the relational property attributed to the object as if it were simply located there. But both the object and the organism are necessary conditions for the emergence of these qualities; and if either were different, the quality would be different.

To return to our original question, then, we may say that the naïve realist is right, for the sound produced is really a quality of the event of the tree falling. But the representative realist is right in denying that the tree or the event of its falling has this quality when it is not related to an organism in such a way that this quality can emerge. On the other hand, the representative realist is wrong in concluding from this fact that when the quality emerges it emerges in the subject; that conclusion is incompatible with the generally tenable theory of the relational origin of quality and, since it has devastating epistemological consequences, it should be avoided when there is a harmless alternative.

Generally it is thought that the representative realist is nearer the truth than the naïve realist, because the tree, as the former hypothesizes it, is more like the "real" tree than the one we believe we normally perceive. This, it seems to me, is a mistake arising from a tacit physicalism that is very difficult to escape nowadays. But it is a physicalism with no cogent epistemological ground, for both the sensuous and the physical properties of an object are nothing more than specifications of the potential nature of the object in two contexts.

V. Appearance and Reality

It would be imprudent to speak of the metaphysical implications of the theory as developed so far, for it deals with only one small sector of one problem, and we should heed Plato's warning not to hurry over and miss some steps in the dialectic of knowledge and being. Nevertheless, our attempt at solving the problem before us has led us into a metaphysical inquiry concerning the inherence of quality in existing beings; furthermore, the problem of the relation of sensory quality to the qualities of an object which make its sensuous cognition possible is, as it were, an analogon of the more extensive metaphysical problem of the relation of appearance to reality. Any solution proffered to the problem before us will intimate, though not strictly imply, something concerning the general outlines of a solution to the broader problem. At least it will indicate in a general way how the world *might* be constituted so that sensing can occur as it has been described in this paper.

If the problem of appearance and reality is nothing more than that of sensuous and non-sensuous qualities "writ large," there are, I believe, four broader views adumbrated in our discussion.

(1) Appearance is not a realm set over against reality. Reality may appear, and appearances are ingredients in the total reality. This is merely a generalization of the thesis that quality is a quality of an object, not exclusively of consciousness as a separate realm of being.

(2) Appearance is not a sector of reality with sharp lines which destine some aspects of reality to appear and others not to appear. The primary qualities are not on one side of an ontological distinction and the secondary qualities on the other. The line existing at any time between mere appearance and reality is determined not only by the character of the object and the abilities of the subject, but also by the perspectives realized in actual epistemological situations. Appearance is not an *imperium in imperio* but the histrionic rôle some aspects of things assume with respect to others. Reality, as Kant said of the thing in itself, is "the other side of appearance."

(3) *Reality* has two meanings. (*a*) There is the relatively empty meaning of the word whereby we indicate anything that in any way is. In this sense, appearance is a part of the total reality of things. The abstract ontological categories of pure or mere being apply both to the object *in propria persona* and to it in its rôle as appearing. Only because of this can the "order and connection of ideas" be the same as the "order and connection of things." In fact, in this sense the word means as much—and as little—as Spinoza's substance.

(*b*) There is a narrower but more fruitful meaning of the term, by which it is distinguished from what we call "mere appearance."[3] A mentionable object is real provided, first, that there is a relationship with a position which an object so constituted can fill; and, second, that an object so constituted does more than fill merely this one position. That is why an object must possess an accident in order to be real, i.e., in order to be more than mentionable or hypothetical. If it does not meet the first requirement we call it not hypothetical but illusory. An object which occupies no systemic position is called "mere appearance" because our categories do not accord it a place in reality in this narrower mean-

[3] The differences between these concepts of reality and a comparison of their metaphysical importance will be found in my paper, "Nicolai Hartmann's Criticism of Kant's Theory of Knowledge" (*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 2 (1942)), pp. 472–500, part IV, "The Identity of Principles."

ing of the word. As our categories grow in complexity, however, more and more such appearance is converted to reality in some system; and as the systems are progressively integrated, accidents are converted to essential properties.

(4) Consciousness in its transactions with existing things is not a creative function or process so much as a selecting and discriminating agent. Of all the sides of an object, consciousness at any time relates to only some. These are selected because of the organism's manifold possibilities for dealing with the object in a manipulative way. The epistemological relation may be described as one in which one of the relata has, as it were, reflected into itself, as a relational property, not only the actual relation to the object but also properties only to be realized in other possible relations. The organism can act so as to establish these now merely possible relations, and by virtue of its integral character in behaving and planning to behave, there is for it an interpenetration of the merely possible into the actual. This interpenetration as the condition of discriminatory behavior is the foundation of meaning, and it explains why the modifications of the organism act as symbols whereas those of an object uniquely related to other objects can be at most signs or, for us, symptoms.

An organism with a central nervous system is the most versatile of all actors in a relational context. Its versatility is evidenced as the consciousness of what the object is not but can be. Its intelligence is simply its readiness to act with respect to the not-now-given properties of the object. Consciousness, to the extent that it is more than passive sentience, is always consciousness of possibilities not now realized.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Liberal Tradition. A Study of the Social and Spiritual Conditions of Freedom. WILLIAM AYLOTT ORTON. New Haven: Yale University Press. London: Humphrey Milford. Oxford University Press. 1945. xiv + 317 pp. $3.50.

In times when manifold plagues both old and new afflict mankind, and tempt even the most balanced of thinkers to advocate drastic remedies, it is well to be reminded of some of the traditional philosophies which have stood the test of the centuries. Political liberalism, it is true, is by that name scarcely a single century old, and by some is already regarded as a promising candidate for oblivion. Professor Orton is not one of these. He finds it not

only "the noblest of political philosophies" but "a call to adventure" and a militant faith for the future. He is an economist well-versed in the humanities, a trenchant polemist, and a belated Victorian liberal, angry and ill at ease in an obstinately collectivist era. He has a strong anti-state and anti-secular bias, and his historical rendering of liberalism is so much more traditional than liberal that it sounds, much of the time, like the work of an enlightened Tory. He lavishes his admiration upon Burke and Macaulay, Belloc and Berdyaev, Hayek, von Mises, Sorokin, Herbert Hoover, and Henry M. Wriston, but above all upon that "great liberal" Lord Acton, with his key assertion that "liberty is itself the highest political end."

Professor Orton's list of detestations is even longer: Plato's *Republic* ("one of the most horrible books ever written"), Comte, Marx, Freud, the late Lord Keynes, and his American counterparts, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, and all New Dealers, all believers in "peace-by-force" through any action by nation-states, Professor Laski and Wendell Berge, and especially Sir William Beveridge and his so-called "welfare state." Although the author writes from Smith College in America, his academic orientation is British, and he is filled with nostalgia for that pre-1914 Europe in which the cultivated Briton might travel at will. "How much better a place," he laments, "was the Europe of forty years ago than any Europe since—that old Europe where one could travel without a passport, without being stripped, searched, and insulted every hundred miles or so, where the cult of hate was only a cloud no bigger than a small newspaper, where the eternal values were not yet wholly forgotten and defiled. How firm and salutary were the sanctities of fatherland and motherland: can anything so good ever be again?" His answer is: "Never again the same. . . . It is right to battle for the values of the past. It is necessary, and far more dangerous, to fight for the values of the future: who knows what they are, who knows if there are any?" (p. 307). In view of such a pessimistic approach to the decadent present, it is not surprising that his book sheds more light upon "the values of the past" than upon the precarious "values of the future."

Although Professor Orton's first contention is that a great tradition, liberalism, is now "all but lost in a fog of careless words and empty phrases," he wastes little space in attempting an exact definition of it. "The faith of the liberal," he contends, "is the hardest to define because it is the boldest and the biggest." He envisages it as a resolute saying of "Yes" to changing, expanding human association, and, indeed, to productive life itself. "Man is not born free, but freedom is true manhood. Life is freedom,

and the adventure of life is finding out what freedom means and demands of a man. In the end, given liberty to learn, men will find out that freedom means community" (p. 309). Liberalism is thus the architect of ever-widening community. Its method is "patient empiricism." Liberalism "offers no blueprint, no utopia; but its central principle becomes in practice a sufficient rule of direction. . . . The core of the liberal creed (it was the supreme insight of the Greeks) is that in a true community the members are truly free." The goal of liberalism "has always been something more than the vague 'liberty' that every demagogue appeals to: it is liberty-within-community, expanding liberty within expanding community." Consequently liberalism "finds its immediate, specific, and unending task in preserving the open-endedness of human association" (pp. 3, 19).

Not many will challenge such broad affirmations, or the author's thesis that, historically speaking, liberalism, "with Aristotle for its godfather, stands firm rooted in the Christian ethos." But Professor Orton, in company with all Catholic and many Protestant theologians, goes much further to declare that "it is only in the Christian doctrine of man that we can find a firm and reasoned ground for the American affirmation that 'all men are created equal.'" Apart from "those Christian postulates which the founding fathers inherited," he argues, the proposition is not self-evident, or even "evident at all, it is preposterous." The modern world "has been coasting along in easy assurance that the [liberal] values will survive the destruction of the [Christian] system. The assumption is dangerous" (pp. 2–3, 55–57).

So enthusiastic is the author's portrayal of the medieval synthesis, and so denigrating his account of its disintegration, that one wonders at first how there could have been anything left for him to admire in the Victorian age.

> From the seventh to the seventeenth century the thought and culture of the civilized world had an actual unity that it is hard for us even to imagine. . . . For a thousand years all Europe sought the sanction (for something beyond local considerations of interest or expediency) in the Catholic Church; and in those parts of the world which eventually rejected that authority, appeal was made to one of two—as it were, fragmentary—substitutes: either to state establishments that retained a church but dropped the catholicity, or to declarations of rights that retained the catholicity (in theory at least) but dropped the Church. Each had its limitations; and the two halves failed to make a whole. [Pp. 60–61.]

Universal community having thus been destroyed, both sides "got mixed up in the play of power politics," and secular states and national churches battled for absolute but provincial authority. Amid the wars and persecutions of the sixteenth century in

France there appeared, according to the author, "the true precursors of modern liberalism," those *Politiques* whose unofficial spokesman was Jean Bodin. They saw that "liberty in community depends on three great postulates": (1) there can not be more than one source or kind of coercion in a community; (2) the system of coercive law is limited by the moral principles of natural law; and (3) the exercise of political authority must be held to a minimum. "It is because of its supreme respect for personal ends," says the author, "that liberalism keeps the state at a distance." The latter "as an agent of widening human community is fatally handicapped by the fact that it is not, and cannot be, human enough. It is too abstract, too impersonal, too monistic" (pp. 139–140, 169).

Professor Orton's liberalism, in other words, forbids absolutes only in the sphere of political organization. One searches his pages in vain for adequate recognition of the irresistible tendency of religious absolutism to invade and embitter the political arena. His protagonists of liberalism are almost exclusively religious; the secular champions of liberty and tolerance against the Church's entrenched prerogatives and power are hardly mentioned. France, as usual, provides the horrible example of liberty become license because of godless politics. The cardinal error of the French Revolution was its individualistic search for a political absolute in secular terms, "the pet dogma of the revolution with its inherent trend toward materialism" which the Church rightly continued to attack. "The fact that Mussolini attacked it too does not make the Vatican fascist: even Benito had his insights." Yet there is "no clear lead to freedom within community in the fervent nationalism of the Maurras-Barrès school"; and the same is true, on different grounds, of both the idealistic working-class internationalism of Jaurès and outright Communist materialism, for neither affords a basis for universal brotherhood. The author thus arrives at his first major conclusion: liberalism (as he conceives it) must break with the national state or perish; it must "disentangle itself from the net of political nationality before it is choked to death" (pp. 148, 157–158).

But, in order to find our way out of the nationalistic "valley of dry bones," we must first recognize what it is that has brought us there. The answer is: "that pervasive materialism which seduced intelligent people to deny the transcendent nature of man and the true bonds of human solidarity." Physical science applied to the study of human society "constitutes the very core and cancer of falsehood." Its aggressive form was Comte's religion of positivism.

> It appeared at first as an ally of liberalism. But it was to prove a most potent factor in reducing political liberalism to its recent state of bewilderment and ineffectiveness. For the core of liberalism is free and integrated personality; and the expression of that is its goal and program. Positivists say precisely the same thing; but the integrative formula they offer is radically different from that which lay at the heart of European culture. So much the worse, they reply, for European culture; and the rejoinder cannot be casually dismissed. Thus the contest involves the soul of civilization; and it is an open issue in both Western Europe and America. [Pp. 180, 199.]

The crucial issue having thus been joined, Professor Orton lashes out at Comte, Spencer, H. G. Wells, Freud, Julian Huxley, and others who allegedly hold that "the ultimate ends of human existence on this planet can be defined, and eventually encompassed, by the same type of mental procedure that has so signally enlarged man's knowledge of, and control over, his physical environment." But who, beside the author, may be safely counted upon to stand on the other side as the defender of the truly liberal tradition? It postulates "a certain autonomy" and causal efficacy of the spiritual; and there must be, he insists, "the universal extension of a common religious discipline, the same in all essentials for all people" (pp. 63, 203, 255). What this could mean in institutional terms is not at all clear. It would seem to imply a catholic church; yet the sole authentic champion of modern liberalism can hardly be the church which "has never compromised with the Liberal Society nor allowed doctrines of the Liberal faith to insinuate themselves into the body of Church philosophy,"[1] and whose Syllabus of Errors in 1864 denounced as false the proposition that "the Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile and align himself with progress, Liberalism, and modern civilization."[2] Professor Orton expressly declares that no one church or sect has a monopoly of the "one supreme perception" of religion, although "a certain advantage" in such matters accrues to the dogmatic and liturgical churches.

A similar atmosphere of hesitancy combined with despairing counsels of perfection pervades the author's concrete political advice on both national and international levels. He condemns both laissez-faire and the social-welfare state, but he has nothing to offer the victims of recurrent economic maladjustments except decentralization and "functional associations" accompanied by the consoling preachment that the values of free personality are higher than those of mere economics. He ridicules those who seek economic security for all the people, and who hope to achieve a meas-

[1] Emmet J. Hughes, *The Church and the Liberal Society* (Princeton, 1944), p. 264.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

ure of it by political planning. He wants all sorts of desirable social ends to be reached without (or with an absolute minimum of) political means: small business and agriculture are to be encouraged, natural resources conserved, and employment set free to wax or wane; but not by the state. He manifests some of the libertarian anarchist's distrust of human nature in all political directions, combined with a complete trust in the same human nature (or perhaps in a few choice specimens of it) as long as its activities are voluntary and non-political. Yet his anarchy does not fail to include a constable, for he is very hard on all who question the sanctity of property as expounded by John Locke, on which "the Church of Rome remains the one society that stands dogmatically firm" (p. 113).

In his chapter on "The Peace-by-Force Illusion," Professor Orton holds that "the reintegration of Europe is the key to the whole puzzle [of world peace]." Yet he pours only scorn upon all attempts to solve it through organizations based upon national states. The United Nations Charter is "the logical conclusion of a strictly materialistic philosophy." World community can not be achieved by politics, for "all international politics is power politics." This flows from the very nature of the territorial state, which is, externally regarded,

> nothing whatever but a physical-force machine, maintained to guard and promote the material interests of those who put up the money. . . . An assemblage of states will no more produce a universal moral order than a lot of lobsters thrown into a pound will produce a republic of lobsters. This is not because states or lobsters are "bad," but because their nature falls short of personality. To talk of states as if they were persons, endowed with the spiritual impulses and aspirations of human beings, and therefore morally accountable, is a piece of pure abstraction for which not even Hegel can be held responsible. It is a habit of modern journalism, catering to that mixture of vulgar passion and dominant materialism which renders unto Caesar the things that are God's because Caesar can be bribed. [In sum] the state is not a Christian gentleman . . . international community lies on a different plane from international politics; and those who seek the road to it must carry not a gun, but a cross. [Pp. 167, 238–239, 245, 249, 258.]
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> Even at the risk of total extinction [argues Professor Orton] liberalism must proclaim a different road to community. . . . That road lies in stimulating functional coöperation, regardless of nationality, in every quarter where it exists already, or can be brought into existence . . . the aim must be the establishment of mixed commissions of qualified people, on an ad hoc basis, wherever opportunity offers a suitable field for common enterprise. . . . It is at least conceivable that out of the association of the leaders of such functional enterprises for specific tasks, backed by the encouragement and resources of genuinely peace-loving nations, some elements of a permanent functional internationalism would arise. [Pp. 258–259.]

Now there are plenty of reasons for apprehension that the present political struggles toward international order are both inadequate and premature in the ideal sense. But to dismiss all such efforts as futile until millions of men reach an indefinitely higher stage of religious morality, that is, become Christian gentlemen, is surely sheer defeatism. If the liberal tradition has only that to offer to an age of super-powers, it will deserve to have "its centenary celebrated by a wake." But political liberalism is something better than the non-political religionism which Professor Orton would make it out to be. There is a liberal tradition which offers more hope to a battered humanity than his does. Well aware of human frailty and the temptations of power, this liberalism dares not only to proclaim his high goals of free personality and liberty-in-community as ends, but also to call upon men to master and moralize politics and economics as means to their realization rather than evading their perils in a new monasticism of high-minded retreat.

Such a course has all the grave dangers which the author has pointed out, and more. Many of those who call themselves liberals have succumbed to them, and have made imperative a careful scrutiny of their right to that honorable label. But to turn away, on that account, from the modern world's most pressing problems as if they were unreal or unworthy of the attention of a magnanimous man is hardly the best way to manifest the power and scope of the liberal tradition.

To diagnose the ills of modernity as moral degeneracy is to oversimplify matters; and if Professor Orton took his own sermon seriously he would take even longer steps on the road to Roman medievalism. He should examine more carefully his allegedly essential linkages between nationalism and materialism, and between liberalism and absolutist religion. The *mystiques* of recent nationalism have been notoriously anti-materialistic in their professions if not in their practices; and the reputed indispensability of "the religious apprehension" to "the sense of right for its final orientation" is belied by the existence in many centuries and countries of a host of intelligent and devoted liberals who have not been "religious people," as the author acknowledges (p. 280). To write a history of the liberal tradition which expressly belittles the contributions of secular rationalism is to tell something less than half the story. No amount of brilliant scoring of debating points against the shortcomings of democratic politicians can atone for such omissions, no matter how pleasing the latter may be to the cultivated literary minds of pulpit and library liberals.

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